



Vice-Chancellor’s Excellence Awards for Professional Staff Nomination Statement Exemplar 1 (Team)

| Nominee Details (Individual or one team representative) | |
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| Name | Peter Jones |
| Position/Team | Language and Learning Team |
| Nomination criterion | Innovation Excellence |

| Part A Synopsis (approx. 100 words) |
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| <p>Peter Jones, Linda Brown, Martin Smith and Karen Maloney have consistently implemented proactive and innovative programs for language and learning support and have provided an essential service for international students and domestic students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Their program, Academic English Tutor Online (AETO), while embracing technology for easy and convenient access, also offers face-to-face assistance to students. Online support includes web based self-help information and direct assistance with aspects of language such as grammar and syntax, and focuses on improving academic writing. Members of the Language and Learning Team demonstrate a quest for excellence in the tutoring and administrative services they deliver and have significantly upgraded the existing language support offered at Curtin. The team operates in a cohesive and highly competent manner and any one of them might be found offering individualised assistance to small groups of students late into the evening.</p> |
| Part B Actions or strategies used to achieve objectives (max. 500 words) |
| <p>Peter, Linda, Martin and Karen have worked together as the Language and Learning Team for 18 months. After establishing their team, they noted a significant gap between the expectations of lecturers for advanced level academic writing skills and the ability of NESB students to express themselves sufficiently well in their academic writing. They developed the AETO, a suite of diagnostic tools and tasks for self assessment and learning that students can engage with online, and they linked these to personalised, individual and small group tutoring sessions in all aspects of academic writing. The team is currently investigating the program’s suitability for a mobile phone interface.</p> <p>The team has attracted funding for the development and application of their online language tool and is continually improving its contents for relevance and best practice language development models. They monitor the use of the online assistance through a brief user survey and report that it is not only NESB students who are using the facility.</p> <p>The team has hosted staff from other WA universities who want to improve the ability of their international students to engage successfully with academic learning. Their innovative program has been commended by other WA universities, and may be more widely adopted throughout the sector. The team instigated the Universities’ English Language Support Association, with Peter as inaugural chair and a membership from universities throughout WA. The Association contributes to the Australian Universities IELTS Cooperative to influence the initial selection and ongoing support of international students in Australian universities.</p> |

Part C The outcomes and relationship to the Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017 (max. 500 words)

Students require and receive a range of services from the University in order to achieve to their optimum capacity. If a barrier exists that prevents this, every effort needs to be made to overcome it and provide clear pathways to success. The Language and Learning Team recognised a barrier that existed for a particular group of Curtin students, only to find that their remedy has become more widely used than they at first envisaged.

Students from WA secondary schools come from diverse cultural backgrounds, where written English can be difficult to master for those who have recently arrived. A considerable number of undergraduates struggle with the requirements of academic writing, especially early in their studies, and have found the English language skills and academic writing tools in the AETO to be of significant assistance.

One of the qualities that all university students seek to enhance is their ability to be independent learners. This task has been given a considerable boost by the Language and Learning Team. They have fostered a realistic hope in international students for a high level of success in their studies, which has led to increased efforts by those students towards the achievement of their degrees.

Lecturers have reported that they also direct other students with under-developed academic writing skills to the Language and Learning Team’s online resource, saying that it provides a definitive and reliable teaching tool. They report that it makes their marking task more efficient.

The work of the Language and Learning Team contributes to the success of international students at Curtin, an acknowledged economic imperative for the University sector.

Curtin now provides a unique English language support facility that helps the University to attract a high number of international students to Curtin.

The team thus contributes significantly towards the People and Culture strategic objective to *engage students and staff as partners in a flexible, inspiring and technology advanced learning environment* by making the environment in which learning takes place more satisfying for both students and staff. The team’s initiative also supports Teaching and Learning objectives to *lead in innovative education* and *provide a richly interactive and personalised learning experience* and Engagement and Impact objectives to *meet the needs of the communities we serve* and *expand international outreach*.

| Signature: | Name: | Date: |
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